

LEPIDOPTERA ATTRACTED TO A YOUNG PLANTATION IN WESTER ROSS

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IN NOVEMBER 1983, my youngest son Nevis moved into a former croft house, on the bleak moorland peninsula north of Gairloch in Ross-shire. His land was an unfenced area of bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and grazed grass, sloping seaward and overlooking the Minch, with uninterrupted views of the Outer Hebrides, Skye and the Shiant Islands. This exposed west-facing property at Allt Grisean* was fenced and gated in 1985 to keep out sheep and my son commenced planting native trees, including alder *Alnus*, birch *Betula*, larch *Larix*, oak *Quercus*, rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, willow *Salix* and Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris*. After years of struggle against frequent salt-laden gales, he now has a dense patch of vegetation growing to a height of two to three metres. In the last few years this oasis has attracted many species of Lepidoptera, including eleven moths that I have not encountered in thirty-two years at Muir of Ord, 85 kilometres to the east-south-east, near the opposite coast of the same county.

The details of these eleven species recorded in the 10 km square NG78, in vice-county 105, are as follows:

Nomophila noctuella D.&S. Rush Veneer. Single specimens on 7 and 14 August 1996.

Trichiura crataegi L. Pale Eggar. One ssp. *ariae* Hb. on 6 September 1996.

Philudoria potatoaria L. Drinker. A male on windowsill of house and a female in nearby bracken on 18 July 1996. Larvae seen on 10 September 1995, 8 September 1996 and, amazingly, a young caterpillar – out of hibernation – sunning itself on a wooden fence on the mild Christmas Eve of 1996. My son, his wife and daughter were sitting out-of-doors with the temperature at 6°C, while the weather in Easter Ross was below freezing and foggy. Incidentally, an active young larva of *Arctia caja* L. Garden Tiger was also seen in their garden on this day.

Coenocalpe lapidata Hb. Slender-striped Rufous. One emerged in early September 1991.

Crocallis elinguaris L. Scalloped Oak. A female laid eggs in a plastic box on 29 July 1995.

Furcula furcula Cl. Sallow Kitten. One on 18 June 1989.

Notodonta dromedarius L. Iron Prominent. Two imagines recorded in 1996: the first on 14 July at rest on a willow trunk and the second on 8 August.

Eligmodonta ziczac L. Pebble Prominent. A larva on aspen, 8 September 1996.

* The name of this crofting township appears on Ordnance Survey maps as Aultgrishan but recent research by Gaelic scholars has corrected this spelling.

Aporophyla lutulenta D.&S. ssp. *lueneburgensis* Freyer. Northern Deep Brown Dart. One on 22 July 1996.

Phlogophora meticulosa L. Angle Shades. One in house porch on 31 October 1993 and common in the open around the date of 24 October 1994.

Rivula sericealis Scop. Straw Dot. One taken and photographed on 21 July 1996.

Three Tortricoidea have been recorded:

Syndemis musculana Hb. ssp. *musculana* Hb. A pair *in copula* on birch on 4 June 1995 and an imago on 2 June 1996.

Olethreutes lacunana D.&S. One taken on 18 July 1996.

Epinotia immundana F.v.R. A dark male (with costal fold) similar to plate 29, figure 14 in Bradley *et al.* (1979).

Other Lepidoptera recorded:

Lasiocampa quercus L. ssp. *callunae* Palm. Northern Eggar. Common in the district but only one record for the garden: a larva on 31 July 1984.

Xanthorhoe montanata D.&S. ssp. *montanata* D.&S. Silver-ground Carpet. The first example was seen on 30 July 1995 and was followed by five imagines between 24 June and 18 July in 1996.

Epirrhoe alternata Müll. Common Carpet. Again the first was seen on 30 July 1995 and one ssp. *obscurata* South was photographed on 18 July 1996.

Camptogramma bilineata L. Yellow Shell. One seen in the "early days" (i.e. before the planting programme) on 18 August 1986.

Entephria caesiata D.&S. Grey Mountain Carpet. Commonly disturbed from outcrops in the Highlands, even down to sea level, but only a single imago noted in the garden, this specimen on 11 August 1996.

Lampropteryx suffumata D.&S. Water Carpet. A single example on 21 July 1996.

Cosmorhoe ocellata L. Purple Bar. One rescued from a spider's web on 30 July 1995 and singles photographed on 19 July and 12 August 1996.

[*Chloroclysta concinnata* Steph. Arran Carpet. Two specimens checked carefully though genitalia not examined: the first photographed on 31 August 1994 nearest to plate 69 figure 12 in South (1961) and the second on 18 July 1996 as figure 9.]

Colostygia pectinataria Knoch. Green Carpet. A dead specimen found in July 1995.

Hydriomena furcata Thunb. July Highflyer. A very pale grey example, with prominent dark angled band at one third, on 29 August 1993 and another specimen seen on 8 August 1996.

Perizoma didymata L. ssp. *didymata* L. Twin-spot Carpet. A single imago of this abundant Highland moth on 31 August 1994.

Abraxas grossulariata L. Magpie. As mentioned in my note in *Ent. Rec.* **103**: 188 this is a common moth in north-west Scotland and noted in the garden on 16 July 1985, 5 July 1986 and in abundance July to 4 August 1994.

Ematurga atomaria L. ssp. *minuta* Heyd. Common Heath. An abundant species on moorland in the district though only one spotted within the garden, a female on 23 June 1996.

Laothoe populi L. Poplar Hawk. An imago noted on 5 June 1994 and eleven larvae seen feeding on aspen and willow between 8 and 21 September 1996.

Phalera bucephala L. Buff-tip. A single imago seen on 2 July 1995 and three larvae feeding on alder on 21 September 1996.

Arctia caja L. Garden Tiger. Larvae fairly common especially in September and recorded also on 24 May 1992, in early June of 1995 and 1996 (see also under *Philudoria potatoria* L.). The only imagines encountered were on 23 July 1995 (a dead specimen) and 18 July 1996.

Spilosoma lubricipeda L. White Ermine. Two specimens recorded: on 29 June 1995 and 21 June 1996.

Noctua pronuba L. Large Yellow Underwing. Surprisingly just a single example of this abundant moth – on 12 August 1996.

N. comes Hb. Lesser Yellow Underwing. One on 28 August 1995 and an ab. *nigrescens* Tutt photographed on 12 August 1996.

Lacanobia oleracea L. Bright-line Brown-eye. One at rest on bracken and two dead specimens found in July 1996.

Cerapteryx graminis L. Antler. Common in the Highlands though only single specimens noted: on 19 August 1995 and 11 August 1996.

Antitype chi L. Grey Chi. One on 20 August 1996.

Acrionicta megacephala D.&S. Poplar Grey. Singles recorded on 26 May, 2 June and 19 July 1996.

A. psi L. Grey Dagger. A larva feeding on rowan on 21 August 1994.

Apamea monoglypha Hufn. Dark Arches. Imagines in August 1991 and on 17 July 1995 and 15 June 1996.

A. crenata Hufn. Clouded-bordered Brindle. A dead specimen found in July 1996.

Autographa gamma L. Silver Y. A single imago visited the garden on 13 September 1994.

A. pulchrina Haw. Beautiful Golden Y. One photographed on 12 July 1996.

Hypena proboscidalis L. Snout. A single specimen on 4 August 1994.

By far the commonest of the seven butterflies noted to date is *Pieris napi* L. Green-veined White. The other six are *Polyommatus icarus* Rott. Common Blue; *Vanessa atalanta* L. Red Admiral; *Cynthia cardui* L. Painted Lady; *Aglais urticae* L.

Small Tortoiseshell; *Maniola jurtina* L. ssp. *splendida* White Meadow Brown and *Coenonympha pamphilus* L. Small Heath. The Painted Lady was not seen until 1996 when up to three were seen together between 19 June and 21 September.

Most of the trees suffered serious blasting of their tender foliage in a severe salt-laden westerly gale on 31 May 1996 but, despite this set-back, have recovered remarkably well. It is intended to continue recording lepidoptera as the small plantation develops. A few evenings operating a powerful blended light should attract additional species.

References

- Bradley, J.D., Tremewan, W.G. & Smith, A., 1979. *British Tortricoid Moths. Tortricidae: Olethreutinae*. Ray Society.
- South, R., 1961. *The moths of the British Isles* (new edition). Warne.

The sawfly *Blasticotoma filiceti* Klug, 1834 (Hym: Blasticotomidae) new to Wales – only the fifth British record

On 15 June 1997 I found a single female specimen of the sawfly *Blasticotoma filiceti* Klug, 1834 by general sweeping of bog vegetation in sunny weather on Cors Graianog, Carnarfonshire (grid reference SH 494453). The species was searched for specifically, but without success, on a subsequent visit in poor weather on 26 June.

It appears to be very rare in Britain, especially in natural habitats, having only been recorded from four others. It was first recorded from the Royal Horticultural Society's ornamental gardens at Wisley in Surrey in 1905 and on a number of occasions up to 1928 (Benson, 1951. Hymenoptera Symphyta Section (a). *Handbooks for the Identification of British insects*. VI (2a)). It was subsequently found at Goldsitch Moss, Staffordshire on 13 June and 26 July 1953, the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew on 5 August 1953 (Benson 1953. *Entomologists' mon. Mag.* 89- 304) and Sizergh Castle, Westmorland in 1980 by Keith Alexander (Quinlan & Gauld, 1981. Symphyta (except Tenthredinidae) Hymenoptera. *Handbooks for the Identification of British insects*. VI (2a) (2nd edition)). All sites other than Goldsitch Moss have been ornamental fern gardens and it had initially been postulated that the species was an accidental introduction to Britain (Benson, 1934. *Entomologists' mon. Mag.* 70: 201-204).

Blasticotoma filiceti is known to be a stem borer in the rachis of ferns, having been found in Lady Fern *Athyrium felix-femina*, ferns of the genus *Dryopteris* and Ostrich Fern *Matteuccia struthiopteris* (Benson, 1934, 1953 *op. cit.*). Midtgaard (*op. cit.*) also lists Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*, Male Fern *Dryopteris felix-mas* and ferns of the genus *Polystichum* (Shield Ferns) as food plants. The bog vegetation at Cors Graianog comprises a floating mat of *Sphagnum*, with abundant Cotton-grass *Eriophorum vaginatum*, Moor Grass *Mollinia caerulea*, Cross Leaved Heath *Erica tetralix*, Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*, Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum* and Bog-bean *Menyanthes trifoliata* and includes four species of fern,